

APPLICATION FOR
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FOR

MEDIA ON DEMAND SYSTEM AND METHOD

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MEDIA ON DEMAND SYSTEM AND METHOD

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

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This invention is related to Utility Patent Application 09/775,692, filed February 2, 2001, Attorney Docket Number 50N3463.01, and entitled "Web Browser Plug-in for TV", Provisional Patent Application 60/197,297, filed April 14, 2000, Attorney Docket Number 50P3986, and entitled "Contextual Web Page", Provisional Patent Application 60/197,848, filed April 14, 2000, Attorney Docket Number 50P3988, and entitled "User Interface for a Set-Top Box", Provisional Patent Application 60/197,308, filed April 14, 2000, Attorney Docket Number 50P3984, and entitled "Method for VOD", Provisional Patent Application 60/197,233, filed April 14, 2000, Attorney Docket Number 50P3877, and entitled "Cable Modem Set Top Box", Provisional Patent Application 60/182,822, filed February 16, 2000, Attorney Docket Number 50N3464, and entitled "Support for Television Viewing in a Standard Web Browser", Provisional Patent Application 60/180,085, filed February 3, 2000, Attorney Docket Number 50N3463, and entitled "Web Browser Plug-in for TV", Provisional Patent Application 60/197,234, filed April 14, 2000, Attorney Docket Number 50P3985, and entitled "Web Based EPG Support", Provisional Patent Application 60/197,320, filed April 14, 2000, Attorney Docket Number 50P3983, and entitled "Support for tuning while viewing a Web Based EPG", and Provisional Patent Application filed January 30, 2001, Attorney Docket Number SNY001V, and entitled "Web Browser and Set Top Box Interface System and Method", each of which is hereby incorporated by reference for their teachings.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. *Field of the Invention*

This invention relates to generating media on demand, and more particularly to generating video
5 media on demand (“VOD”) in a web browser system.

2. *Description of Related Art*

In the United States, a substantial majority of homes have at least one television (there are about
10 2.24 televisions (“TVs) per household according to some sources). Video Cassette Recorders
 (“VCRs”) and Digital Video Disc (“DVD”) players enable users to selectively view and review
 video segments on a TV. The advent of digital video media content technologies, the personal
 computer (“PC”) market, and growing usage of a highly accessed computer network of networks
 (termed the Internet) has raised user’s expectation of video media content quality, availability,
 and features of viewing the same.

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For these reasons systems have been developed to combine TV, VCR, DVD, computer, and
15 Internet technologies. For example, TV manufacturers have developed TVs that include a VCR
 or DVD player. Cable and Satellite companies have introduced pay per view systems that allow a
 user to select and view limited selections of video content at fixed times. Web developers have
20 created web sites on the Internet that interactive electronic program guides (“EPG”). In addition,
 DVD players and TV tuners have been incorporated into PCs to enable users to view video
 media content on a PC via specialized software.

Given the above, it is clear that users value the ability to enjoy the flexibilities enabled by these technologies. In particular, users value the ability media on their schedule or on demand. In order to do, a user can purchase the media in a permanent format that may be viewed at any time. This may be cost prohibitive. The user may also rent the media in permanent format from a rental group. The user must then retrieve and return the media. As noted, Cable and Satellite companies have introduced pay per view systems that allow a user to select and view limited selections of video media content at fixed times. The user, however, limited to those preset times and limited titles. Ideally, the user would be able to enjoy a media selection on demand (MOD).

Further, as more people become familiar with Web Browser software environments, it has become desirable to incorporate Web Browser software application in systems or devices to control the operation of the media on demand systems. In particular, it is desirable to activate and control media on demand systems by navigating through a plurality of Web pages. Web Browser environments, however, are stateless because that do not differentiate web pages as navigation occurs. When a web browser is used to request a system or device to perform a particular action related to media on demand, several steps may be required. Meanwhile, a different web page could be accessed without completing the required steps and without knowledge of the previous media on demand request. Accordingly, a need exists for media on demand system that employs a Web browser to effectively activate and control a media on demand session or event.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention includes a method and system for generating a media on demand (MOD) event.

The invention includes generating a user selectable MOD event in a stateless software module.

Further, invention includes receiving a MOD event protocol file for the selected MOD event.

5 The protocol file indicates the source of a media signal for the selected MOD event. The invention also includes directing the generation of the MOD event based on the MOD event protocol file.

The MOD event protocol file may be parsed and then used in the process of directing the generation of the MOD event. Further, the stateless software module may be a Web browser. The invention may generate a user selectable link coupled to a MOD event in a page of a Web Browser. Then the invention may include receiving a MOD event protocol file from the selected link for the MOD event. The method of generating a media on demand (MOD) event in a media generation system of claim 5, wherein the media generation system is a video generation system and the MOD event is a video on demand (VOD) event. The invention may include a set top box in one embodiment.

15 The MOD event protocol file may include the screen location for the video media event within a page of the Web Browser. The MOD event protocol file may also include the height and width of the VOD event within the page of the Web Browser. The MOD event protocol file may further include the channel location of the VOD event.

In another embodiment, the invention includes a Video on demand (VOD) event that includes a set top box and VOD server. The set top box generates a user selectable link coupled to a VOD event in a page of a Web Browser. A VOD server receives the request for the VOD event and generates a VOD event protocol file for the requested VOD event. The VOD server transmits the 5 VOD event protocol file to the requesting link of the set top box. The set top box receives the VOD event protocol file for the VOD event from the selected link. Then, the set top box evokes a VOD event handler plug-in upon receiving the VOD event protocol file. The VOD event handler plug-in directs the generation of the VOD event based on the VOD event protocol file. The VOD server may also dynamically allocate a channel for the VOD event and includes an 10 indicator of the same in the VOD event protocol file.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram digital cable television system with video on demand (“VOD”) in accordance with the present invention.

5 FIG. 2 is a block diagram of the set top box shown in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of a set top box according to an embodiment of the present invention.

10 FIG. 4 is a detailed block diagram of the set top box of FIG. 3.

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of the software architecture of the set top box of FIG. 4.

15 FIGS. 6A to 6D are diagrams of browser and video content screen configurations in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of the software architecture of the TV/VOD media handler of the set top box of FIG. 4.

20 FIG. 8 is a flowchart of a process of invoking the TV/VOD media handler in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 9 is a flowchart of a TV/VOD media handler process in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 10 is a block diagram of media on demand architecture according to an embodiment of the present invention.

5 FIG. 11 is a flowchart of an exemplary process of invoking the TV/VOD media handler in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 12 is a flowchart of a TV/VOD media handler process in accordance with the present invention.

Like reference numbers and designations in the various drawings indicate like elements.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Throughout this description, the preferred embodiment and examples shown should be considered as exemplars, rather than as limitations on the present invention.

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FIG. 10 is a block diagram of exemplary media on demand (“MOD”) architecture 500 in which the present invention may be employed. The architecture 500 includes a MOD signal generator 520, a media generation system 200, a media viewer 530, and a protocol file source 510. As explained in detail below, the media generation system 200 generates a media event including a MOD event upon the election of a user via a Web based interface operating within the media generation system 200. The media generation system may receive a media or MOD signal related to the media event. The MOD signal generator 520 may generate the media signal and communicate the signal to the media generation system 200 via a link 525. The MOD signal generator 520 may be any system that can produce a MOD signal including a satellite network, radio/television broadcast system, and Internet system. Accordingly, the link 525 may be a satellite link, radio frequency link, and Internet link.

10 The media viewer 530 may be any device capable of converting the media event into a human perceptible format including computer, television, radio, and telephone. In one embodiment, the media viewer 530 may be part of the media generation system 200. As noted, the media generation system 200 ideally includes a Web based user interface. The user selects a MOD event for presentation via the media viewer 530 by generating a user selectable link on a web page corresponding to the MOD event. Upon the election of the MOD event, the media

generation system 200 performs multiple steps to generate the MOD event depending on the location of the MOD signal generator corresponding to the MOD event.

In a preferred embodiment when a user selects a link corresponding to the MOD event, the 5 media generation system 200 sends a request for MOD event to the link. The corresponding link transmits a session description protocol (“SDP”) file to the media generation system 200. In the architecture 500, the link may correspond to protocol file source 510 where the SDP is located. The protocol file source 510 transmits the SDP file to the media generation system 200 via the link 515. The protocol file source 510 may be a web based server, satellite signal provider, cable signal provider, and conventional radio/television provider. The link 515 may be similar to link 525. The SDP file includes information about the selected MOD event including its source and the media generation system 200 includes software for parsing the SDP file to determine how to generate the MOD event. The SDP file may also include information about how to present the media event in the media viewer 530. The SDP file enables the media generation system 200 to process/generate the MOD event.

In one embodiment the protocol file source 510 is part of the MOD signal generator 520. Accordingly, the link corresponding to the MOD event corresponds to the MOD signal generator 520. The MOD signal generator 520 may dynamically provision a MOD channel from a shared 20 pool for MOD channels upon receipt of the request. The MOD signal generator 520 then generates a SDP file indicating the dynamically provisioned channel for the MOD event. The MOD signal generator 520 transmits the SDP file to the media generation system 200 via the link 525.

One exemplary media generation architecture 100 is shown in FIG. 1 FIG. 1 is a block diagram for an exemplary interactive cable or satellite television (TV) architecture or system 100 in which the present invention may be employed. The system 100 includes a service provider head end 10, remote server 48, Internet 44, audio/visual devices 26, Internet appliances 28, television 24, set-top box (“STB”) 22, and remote control 36. The head end of the service provider 10 includes a media server 12, EPG server 16, and ISP Host 38. The media server 12 of the head end 10 provides on demand movies and other programming such as interviews with actors, games, advertisements, available merchandise, associated Web pages, and other related content obtained from a media database 14. The electronic programming guide (EPG) server 16 includes a program listing database 18 for generating an EPG. The ISP host 38 includes a content database 52 and is coupled to remote servers 48 via the Internet 44. The remote servers may include another content such as video on demand (“VOD”) content or EPG content. The EPG content received from the remote server 48 may be used to populate or update the program listing database 18 of the EPG server 16. The ISP host 38 includes protocols that enable communication between remote servers 48 via the Internet 44. Accordingly, the service provider 15 head end may represent a MOD signal generator 520 of FIG. 10.

The media server 12 and EPG server 16 are coupled by a transmission medium 20 to the set top box (STB) 22. The transmission medium 20 (link 525 in FIG.10) may include, for example, a conventional coaxial cable television network, a fiber optic cable network, telephone system, twisted pair, a satellite communication system, a radio frequency (RF) system, a microwave system, other wireless systems, a combination of wired and wireless systems or any of a variety

of known electronic transmission mediums. In the case of a coaxial cable television network, transmission medium 20 is commonly realized at the subscriber's premises as a coaxial cable that is connected to a suitable cable connector at the rear panel of the STB 22. The STB 22 represents the media generation system 200 shown in FIG. 10.

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As noted, system 100 further includes a TV 24, such as a digital television. The TV 24 includes a display 26 for displaying programming, an EPG, web browser and other content. The TV 24 represents a media viewer 530 as shown in FIG. 10. The STB 22 may be coupled to the TV 24 and various other audio/visual devices 26 and Internet Appliances 28 by an appropriate interface 30 (link 535 in FIG. 10), which can be any suitable analog or digital interface including an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) 1394 standard interface, S-Video, Component Video, NTSC, PAL, or other analog television interface.

Set-top box 22 can generally provide for bi-directional communication over a transmission medium 20 in the case of a cable STB 22. In other embodiments, bi-directional communication can be effected using asymmetrical communication techniques possibly using dual communication media, one for the uplink and one for the downlink. In any event, the STB 22 can have its own Universal Resource Locator (URL) assigned thereto to provide for direct addressing by the head end and users of the Internet. In the case of a Direct Satellite System (DSS), the STB 22 is often referred to as an Integrated Receiver Decoder (IRD). The transmission medium is a satellite transmission at an appropriate microwave band. A satellite dish antenna with an integral Low Noise Block (LNB) is used to receive such transmissions. A

down-converter converts the received signal to a lower frequency (baseband frequency) for processing by the STB 22.

As shown in FIG. 2, the STB 22 may include a central processing unit (CPU) 132 and memory such as Random Access Memory (RAM) 176, Read Only Memory (ROM), flash memory, mass storage such as a hard disc drive 172, floppy disc drive, optical disc drive or may accommodate other electronic storage media. Such memory and storage media is suitable for storing data as well as program instructions for processes to be executed by the CPU. Information and programs stored on the electronic storage media or memory may also be transported over any suitable transmission medium such as that illustrated as 20. STB 22 may include circuitry suitable for audio decoding and processing 114, the decoding of video data 122 compressed in accordance with a compression standard such as the Motion Pictures Experts Group (MPEG) standard and other processing. It is noted that these components may be incorporated into the TV 24, eliminating the STB 22. In addition, a computer may substitute the TV 24 and STB 22. The computer may include a vary of devices capable of generating video media including a tuner card coupled to a digital network, cable television network, or DSS network.

It is noted that the STB 22 may be coupled to additional devices such as a personal computer, video cassette recorder, camcorder, digital camera, personal digital assistant and other 20 audio/visual or Internet related devices (not shown). In addition, a data transport architecture, such as that set forth by an industry group which includes Sony Corporation and known as the Home Audio-Video Interoperability (“HAVi”) architecture may be utilized to enable interoperability among devices on a network regardless of the manufacturer of the device. This

architecture may be used to create a home network system between electronic devices and Internet appliances. The STB 22 may run an operating system suitable for a home network system such as Sony Corporation's Aperios™ real time operating system. Other operating systems could also be used.

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As shown in FIG. 1, the STB 22 includes an infrared (IR) receiver 34 for receiving IR signals from an input device such as the remote control 36. Alternatively, it is noted that many other control communication methods may be utilized besides IR, such as wired or wireless radio frequency, etc. In addition, it can be readily appreciated that the input device 36 may be any device suitable for controlling the STB 22 such as a remote control, personal digital assistant, laptop computer, keyboard, or computer mouse. In addition, an input device in the form of a control panel located on the TV 24 or the STB 22 can be provided.

10 The STB 22 may also be coupled to an independent service provider (ISP) host 38 by a suitable connection including dial-up connections, DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) or the same transmission medium 20 described above (e.g. using a cable modem) to, thus, provide access to services and content from the ISP and the Internet. STB 22 may also be used as an Internet access device to obtain information and content from remote servers such as remote server 48 via the Internet 44 using host 38 operating as an Internet portal, for example. In certain satellite STB 15 environments, the data can be downloaded at very high speed from a satellite link, with asymmetrical upload speed from the set-top box provided via a dial-up or DSL connection. In one embodiment, the ISP or remote server 48 may be a protocol file source 510 as shown in FIG.10 with the corresponding link 515.

One configuration of a digital STB 22 is shown in detail in FIG. 2. The STB 22 includes a tuner 102, demodulator 106, demultiplexer/descrambler 110, audio decoder 114, modulator 144, video decoder 122, data decoder 126, I/O interfaces 146, system bus 130, graphics processor 136, 5 memory 176, central processing unit (“CPU”) 132, smart card reader 140, disc drive interface 170, and disc drive 172. A transmission medium 20, such as a coaxial cable, is coupled by a suitable interface to the tuner 102. Tuner 102 may include a broadcast in-band tuner for receiving content, an out-of-band (“OOB”) tuner for receiving data transmissions and a return path tuner for providing an OOB return path for outbound data (destined for example for the head end). A separate tuner (not shown) may be provided to receive conventional RF broadcast television channels. Demodulator 106 may demodulate any modulated information from the tuner 102 such as MPEG-2 formatted data. The demultiplexer/descrambler circuit 110 separates the demodulated information into discrete channels of programming. The programming is divided into packets, each packet bearing an identifier called a Packet ID (PID) that identifies the 15 packet as containing a particular type of data (e.g. audio, video, and data). The demultiplexer/descrambler circuit 110 also decrypts encrypted information in accordance with a decryption algorithm to prevent unauthorized access to programming content, for example.

20 Audio packets from the circuit 110 (those identified with an audio PID) are decrypted and forwarded to an audio decoder 114. The audio decoder 114 may convert the audio packets to analog audio to drive a speaker system (e.g. stereo or home theater multiple channel audio systems) or other audio system 116 (e.g. stereo or home theater multiple channel amplifier and speaker systems) or may simply provide decoded audio out at 118. Video packets from the

circuit 110 (those identified with a video PID) are decrypted and forwarded to the video decoder 122. Similarly, data packets from the circuit 110 (those identified with a data PID) are decrypted and forwarded to the data decoder 126.

5 The data decoder 126 transmits decoded data packets to the CPU 132 via the system bus 130. Video decode2 122 passes video data to the graphics processor 136. The graphics processor is a computer optimized to processes graphics information rapidly, in particular graphics intensive data associated with Internet browsing, gaming, and multimedia applications such as those associated with MHEG (Multimedia and Hypermedia information coding Experts Group) set-top box applications. Graphics processor 136 is also coupled to the system bus 130 and operates under the control of CPU 132. It should be noted that the function of a graphics processor 136 may be unnecessary in set-top box designs having lower capabilities. Also the CPU 132 may function as a graphics processor in some applications.

15 The STB may include a smart card reader 140 for communicating with a so called “smart card”, where the smart card reader 140 acts as a Conditional Access Module (CAM). In CAM systems the smart card reader may include a central processor unit (CPU) with associated RAM and ROM memory. Such smart card based CAMs are conventionally utilized for authentication of the user, of transactions carried out by the user, and of services and storage of cryptography 20 keys. For example, the CAM may be used to provide the key for decoding incoming cryptographic data. STB 22 may operate in a bi-directional communication mode. Accordingly, data and other information may be transmitted from the head end 10 to the STB 22 and from the STB 22 using an out-of-band channel. In one embodiment, the data passes through the system

bus 130, modulator 144, and the tuner 102 (operating as a return path OOB tuner) to the transmission medium 20. This enables the STB 22 user to send information to the head end 10, e.g., service requests or changes and registration information.

5 Set-top box 22 may include any of a plurality of I/O (Input/Output) signals at I/O interface 146 for interconnection with other devices. By way of example, and not limitation, a serial RS-232 signal may be provided at port 150 to enable interconnection to any suitable serial device supported by the STB 22's internal software. Similarly, communication with appropriately compatible devices can be provided via an Ethernet port 152, a USB (Universal Serial Bus) port 154, an IEEE 1394 (Firewire or I-Link) port 156, S-video port 158, or infrared port 160. These interfaces may be utilized to interconnect the STB 22 with any of a variety of devices such as storage devices, audio / visual devices 24, gaming devices (not shown), and Internet Appliances 28.

15 I/O interfaces 146 can include a modem port 162 to facilitate high speed or alternative access to the Internet or other data communication functions. In one preferred embodiment, modem port 162 includes a DOCSIS (Data Over Cable System Interface Specification) cable modem. This modem facilitates high speed network access over a cable system when port 162 is appropriately coupled to a transmission medium 20 embodied as a coaxial cable. A PS/2 or other keyboard/mouse/joystick coupled to port 164 may be used to enable data entry into the STB 22. 20 STB 22 also may include a basic video output port 166 for direct connection to a television set such as 24. In one embodiment, Video output port 166 can provide composite video formatted as National Television System Committee ("NTSC") video. In some embodiments, the video

output port 166 may be coupled directly to the graphics processor 136 or the demultiplexer/descrambler 110 rather than passing through the system bus 130 as illustrated in the exemplary block diagram. S-Video signals at output port 158 can be similarly provided without passing through the system bus 130 if desired in other embodiments.

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The infrared port 160 may be embodied as an infrared receiver 34 as illustrated in FIG. 1. The infrared port 160 may receive commands from an infrared remote control 36, infrared keyboard or other infrared control device. Although not explicitly shown, front panel controls may be used in some embodiments to directly control the operation of the STB 22 through a front panel control interface coupled to the I/O interfaces 146. Selected interfaces such as those described above and others can be provided in STB 22 in various combinations as required or desired.

STB 22 may also include a disc drive interface 170 and disc drive mass storage 172 for storage of content and data as well as providing storage of programs operating on CPU 132. STB 22 may also include other storage mediums such as a floppy disc drive, CD ROM drive, CD R/W drive, DVD drive, and others. CPU 132 is coupled through the system bus 130 to the memory 176. Memory 176 may include any suitable memory technology including Random Access Memory (RAM), Read Only Memory (ROM), Flash memory, Electrically Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory (EEPROM), and others.

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FIG. 3 is a basic block diagram of the media generation system in the form of an exemplary STB 200 capable of use with the present invention. A detailed block diagram of the STB 200 is shown in FIG. 4. STB 200 is described in detail in provisional Patent Application 60/197,233, filed

April 14, 2000, Attorney Docket Number 50P3877, entitled "Cable Modem Set Top Box" which is incorporated by reference herein for its teachings on the STB 200. Accordingly, the STB 200 is only briefly described with reference to FIGS. 3 and 4. The STB 200 includes a front end 202, cable modem 204, front end to decoder interface 206, MPU/control system 208, MPEG-2 Decoder 210, and Audio/Graphics System 212. The front end 202 with a digital cable television provider (MOD signal generator 520 in FIG. 10) via a coaxial cable (link 525 in FIG. 10) coupled thereto. The front end 202 could be modified to communicate with alternative digital or analog content providers. The front end to decoder interface 206 links the front end 202, MPU/control system 208, and MPEG-2 decoder 210. The interface 206 includes card readers and an iLink™ interface. The MPEG-2 decoder 210 receives MPEG-2 content from the front end 202 (via the interface 206), and decodes the MPEG-2 content into frames for processing by the Audio/graphics system 212. The microprocessor unit ("MPU")/control system 208 controls the primary operation of the STB 200. The system 208 includes a MPU that supports layers for drivers up to application program interfaces ("APIs") that control the interaction of the components of the STB 200.

The system 208 may receive control data from the front end 202 (via the interface 206) and send control data to the front end (and ultimately a content provider or media signal generator) via the cable modem 204 and front end 202. The cable modem 204 is coupled to the front end 202 and MPU/control system 208 and can retrieve and place digital data packets on the cable system (in this embodiment). The audio/graphics system 212 can receive video and audio content information from the front end (for analog video/audio), the MPEG-2 decoder (digital audio and video), and the MPU/control system 208.

A block diagram of the software architecture 250 for the STB 200 is shown in FIG. 5. The architecture 250 depicts the hardware layer 252, hardware layer interface/driver layer 254, middleware layer 256, and local content/application layer 258. During normal operation of the 5 STB 200, the driver APIs are loaded in the memory of the control system 208. The driver APIs enable communication of events between the MPU and the hardware modules of the STB 200. As shown in FIG. 5, the hardware modules include the Front End Tuner, MPEG-2 Decoder, Demultiplexer, Descrambler, Graphics, Ethernet, Serial port, Smart Card, miscellaneous hardware including keyboard, light-emitting-diodes, infrared, and front panel display.

15 The middleware layer 256 includes a group of content handlers, spyglass content manager, spyglass user interface manager, spyglass thin graphical user interface (“GUI”), and application manager. The middleware layer 256 enables the handlers and managers to run on multiple platforms with little regard for the actual operating system in place. At the top layer is the application layer where user applications reside (e.g. web browser, email, Chat, user setup, home page of STB, Video On Demand (VOD), EPG, and iLink user interface). In the present invention, the browser enables Hyper Text Markup Language (“HTML”) based pages or screens and browser related pages to be formatted for graphic generation by the audio/graphics system 212. The browser also serves as a jumping point for a mechanism for viewing video media 20 content (a selected media event) received from the front end 202 and MPEG-2 decoder 210.

FIG. 6A is an image of a screen generated by the STB 200. The screen includes a HTML page 260. In this case, the page represents EPG from <http://tv.yahoo.com>. The page may represent

media on demand (MOD) programs, in particular video on demand (“VOD”) programs available for selecting. In the STB 200, when a Uniform Resource Locator (“URL”) is selected within the page 260 that returns with a header that indicates video media or VOD content, the STB 200 invokes a browser plug-in in the middleware termed the TV media handler (in FIG. 5). A block 5 diagram of the software architecture of the TV media handler 300 is shown in FIG. 7. As shown in FIG. 7, the TV media handler 300 includes content handler APIs 302, an event decoder 304, a SDP decoder 306, a TV state machine 310, and platform APIs 320. One embodiment of a process 400 for evoking the media handler 300 is shown in FIG. 8. In this process 400, when the browser application detects a URL with a video media type (step 402), the browser application invokes the TV media handler plug-in at step 404 via a call to the content handler.

The TV media handler 300 is a content handler in the middleware layer 256 that is responsible for controlling a region of the screen and painting that region with a transparent color to allow an underlying video frame or layer to show through the browser or HTML layer or frame based on 15 data returned with the URL indicating video media content. The TV media handler 300 communicates with the STB 200 front end 202 and audio/graphics system 212. In addition, when the handler 300, a web browser plug-in, is instantiated via a URL request that returns the header for video/mpeg media content (thus indicating a media or MOD event has been selected), data in the format of a Session Description Protocol (“SDP”) file is also received from the 20 correspond link and protocol file source, i.e., from the protocol file source 510 or the MOD signal generator 520. The SDP file indicates parameters for the video session (layer), i.e., the media or MOD event to be presented via the media viewer 530 (FIG. 10). These parameters may include the channel number to be selected by the front end 202 when the channel is dynamically

creates. The DSP parameters may also include the size of the video layer within the HTML layer and the location of the video layer within the HTML layer. For example, FIG. 6B represents a VOD session where the video layer is positioned in the upper right corner of the HTML layer. FIG. 6C represents a session where the video layer (MOD or VOD event) is positioned in the lower middle of the HTML layer. FIG. 6D represents a MOD or VOD session where the video layer is positioned over the entire the HTML layer.

In this embodiment, the STB 200 generates a HTML layer and video layer and the audio/graphics system 212 is directed to draw these layers. In FIG. 6A, the HTML layer consists of the entire screen. In this case, the graphics system 212 is not directed to clear a section of the HTML layer for the video layer. In FIG. 6B, the video layer consumes a segment of the upper right corner of the screen. In this case, the TV media handler directs the corresponding section of the HTML layer to be cleared and drawn with a transparent color by the graphics handler. The handler 300 also directs the front end to tune to the appropriate channel for the video signal for the MOD or VOD event. The media handler 300 also directs the graphics system 212 to size the video layer to fit within the transparent window of the HTML layer.

When the handler 300 receives the SDP file, the handler parses information in the file using the SPD decoder 306. Based on the parsed data, the handler makes calls to the TV State Machine 210 to perform the appropriate actions as mandated by the SDP file. Accordingly, the media generation system (STB) 200 may generate the selected MOD event based on the SDP file while the user may select to navigate to a different web page.

A flowchart of one process 430 executed by the TV media handler to handle media events is shown in FIG. 9. As shown in FIG. 9, at step 410, the handler 300 parses the video layer session from a received SDP file. The session indicates the source of the video signal to be shown in the video layer. The source may be directly tunable at the front end or may require a URL request to 5 generate a new video stream to be transmitted to the STB 200 from the media signal generator 520 and retrieved by the front end 202 of the media generation system 200. Step 412 determines whether the session is a Video on Demand (VOD) session. When the SDP file indicates a VOD session, the handler 300 generates a URL request to be directed to the respective VOD server as described.

TO
CONTINUATION SHEET

When the SDP file indicates that this instance is a VOD session (step 412), then media handler 300 will communicate with the VOD server (MOD signal generator 520 of FIG. 10) through the use of a special URL request (step 414). The VOD server acts a media signal generator 520 in this embodiment. The URL request generates URL handlers that will parse the request and 15 communicate with the VOD system at the head end of the respective system to create a new session. The URL handlers will pass the information from the VOD server system back to the TV media handler 300.

The handler 300 may also parse the video layer size (step 416) and location (step 418) from the 20 SDP file. There may be default locations and sizes in some applications. The handler 300 directs a transparent section of the HTML or browser layer to be formed (step 420). The present invention is a windowless system where the screen consists of one HTML or browser layer. To display a video layer in this system, a section (or all) of the HTML or browser layer is cleared

and filled with a transparent layer for the video layer to show there through. This reduces the complexity of the STB 200 in terms of MPU cycles, memory overhead and graphics system 212 requirements.

5 At step 424, the handler 300 directs the front end to tune to the channel corresponding to the video signal to be shown in the video layer after parsing the channel from the SDP file at step 422. The channel may correspond to a VOD channel directed to the STB 200. The handler sizes the video layer at step 426 and specifies the location of the video layer on the screen at step 428.

10 It is noted that other events that cause the TV media handler 300 to activate. A channel may be selected via a remote control, keyboard, mouse, or front panel of the STB 200 for example. In this case, the event decoder of the handler 300 directs the TV state machine 310 to act accordingly. Other events may include Channel Up, Fast Forward, and on-screen display (“OSD”) Program Info Display (such as the current settings of the STB 200).

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In the TV media handler 300, the platform APIs 320 provide an abstraction layer to enable the TV Media Handler to interface with the STB 200. The platform APIs include the TV control 322, OSD 324, Front Panel Display 326, Timer Utility 328, and Video Scaling 332. The TV control section will provide an API to the rest of the TV media handler 300 that will abstract the 20 functions of interacting with the actual platform tuning module and others. The On Screen Display (OSD) section, like the TV Tuning section, will provide an interface to the rest of the TV media handler that will abstract the functions and control of running the OSD. This subsection will receive commands through its interface and make the necessary drawing calls to

the Spyglass Thin GUI to draw the information onto the correct area of the TV media handler's window. The Front Panel Display APIs provides an abstract for the TV Media Handler module to control the visual display of the front panel.

5 The timer utility section provides a set of APIs for the TV Media Handler to set up timing specific events. The video scaling section provides the TV Media Handler 300 a method to perform video scaling and/or re-positioning the video window on screen. The content handler APIs 302 of the TV media handler 300 provide a communications channel between the TV media handler and the media handlers parent, either the Spyglass CTM or an HTML media handler. The API's also provide channels to the data sources (URL handlers) and subviews (gif/jpeg images).

10 50P3984.01

Another embodiment of a process 540 for evoking the media handler 300 specific to MOD events is shown in FIG. 11. When an MOD event is selected in a Web Page (step 542), the media 15 generation system 200 sends a request for the selected MOD event to a MOD server via the link (step 544). The MOD server (MOD signal generator 520) generates a SDP file with corresponding connection and screen information upon receipt of the MOD event request. As noted, the MOD server may dynamically allocate a channel corresponding to the selected MOD event. When a MOD SDP file is received from the MOD server (step 546), the TV media 20 hander 300 is activated to process the MOD SDP file (step 548). In one embodiment, the TV media hander 300 is a Web browser plug-in.

An embodiment of a process executed by the TV media hander 300 or MOD event processor is shown in FIG. 12. As a function of the contents of the SDP file, the TV media hander 300 may parse the video layer size from the SDP file (step 552) when present. The TV media hander 300 may also parse the video layer location from the SDP file (step 554) when present. As described 5 above, the TV media hander 300 may generate a transparent section on the HTML layer for video events to be displayed therein (step 556). Further, the TV media hander 300 parses the channel for MOD event (step 558) and directs tuning the parsed channel (step 562) when a channel is present in the SDP file. As noted, the MOD signal generator may dynamically allocate 10 a channel of available channels available for transmission between the MOD signal generator 520 and the media generation system 200. The tuning section 202 of the media generation system 200 is directed to tune the allocated channel for VOD content by the TV media hander 300.

When the SDP file includes the video layer size parameter, the TV media hander 300 directs the 15 audio/graphics system 212 to accordingly size the video layer generated from the tuned VOD signal (step 564). When the SDP file includes the video layer location parameter, the TV media hander 300 directs the audio/graphics system 212 to accordingly locate the video layer generated from the tuned VOD signal (step 566).

20 As noted, when the TV medial handler is initiated by a selection in a HTML page, the returned data will be in the form of a session description protocol (SDP) file. In one embodiment, this resource will be returned with the content-type of video/mpeg. The TV media handler will begin reading the incoming SDP file and decode the data to set up the TV session. The set of

parameters that are available in a SDP file include:

Session description

v= (protocol version)

o= (owner/creator and session identifier).

5

s= (session name)

i=(session information)*

u=(URI of description)*

e=(email address)*

p=(phone number)*

10

c=(connection information - not required if included in all media)*

b=(bandwidth information)*

One or more time descriptions

z=(time zone adjustments)*

k=(encryption key)*

a=(zero or more session attribute lines)*

15

Zero or more media descriptions

Time description

20

t= (time the session is active)

r=(zero or more repeat times)*

25

Media description

m= (media name and transport address)

i=(media title)*

c=(connection information - optional if included at session-level)*

b=(bandwidth information)*

k=(encryption key)*

a=(zero or more media attribute lines)*

30

Window Size

WindowWidth:WidthValue

WindowHeigh:HeightValue

WindowXPos:Xposition

35

WindowYPos:YPosition

Socket ID

SocketID:SocketNumber

TV Commands

40

Service to tune

ServiceID:Channel#

more machine readable storage mediums such as fixed (hard) drives, diskettes, optical disks, magnetic tape, semiconductor memories such as ROMs, PROMs, etc., thereby making an article of manufacture in accordance with the invention. The article of manufacture containing the computer programming code is used by either executing the code directly from the storage 5 device, by copying the code from the storage device into another storage device such as a hard disk, RAM, etc. or by transmitting the code on a network for remote execution.